

Message Text

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PAGE 01 DAMASC 06465 261614Z

44

ACTION SY-05

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 ISO-00 SYE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 INRE-00

CIAE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01

PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 MCT-01 A-01 OPR-02 OC-06 CCO-00

OMB-01 SAM-01 IO-13 SCS-03 SCA-01 DHA-02 /087 W

----- 008936

O P 261538Z SEP 76

FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9732

INFO USIA WASHDC IMMEDIATE

DIA WASHDC IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY AMMAN PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY CAIRO PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY JIDDA PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L DAMASCUS 6465

STATE FOR SY/FO

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, ASEC, SY

SUBJECT: GUERILLA ATTACK ON SEMIRAMIS HOTEL IN DAMASCUS

1. THE FOLLOWING EYEWITNESS ACCOUNT PROVIDED BY CHARLES A. KESTENBAUM OF NBC NEWS WHO WAS ONE OF FIFTY HOSTAGES HELD BY GUERILLAS EARLY MORNING SEP 26 AT SEMIRAMIS HOTEL FOLLOWS:

2. APPROX 0745 LOCAL THIS DATE FIVE GUERILLAS ENTERED SEMIRAMIS HOTEL AND BEGAN SHOOTING IN LOBBY, WOUNDING DESK CLERK. IMMEDIATELY AFTER THEY ROUNDED UP APPROX FIFTY HOSTAGES AND HELD THEM IN FOURTH FLOOR LOUNGE AREA. GUERILLAS ISSUED FOLLOWING DEMANDS: RELEASE OF TWENTY-FIVE PALESTINIANS, HELD CAPTIVE BY SYRIA AND ACCORDING GUERILLAS, SCHEDULED FOR
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PAGE 02 DAMASC 06465 261614Z

EXECUTION, IN EXCHANGE FOR HOSTAGES. REQUESTED NEGOTIATION

OF THESE TERMS THROUGH RUSSIAN, LIBYAN AND SOUTH YEMENI AMBASSADORS. COMMANDER OF ATTACK GROUP VARIOUSLY IDENTIFIED AS "ABU HASHISH" AND "ABU HABIB". HE IDENTIFIED HIMSELF AS ONE OF FEDAYEEN FROM TEL ZAATAR.

3. SYRIAN ARMY SURROUNDED BUILDING WITH TROOPS AND TANKS AND AT 1000 HOURS LOCAL SYRIAN TROOPS BEGAN FIRING AT HOTEL FOURTH FLOOR. SYRIAN TROOPS STORMED HOTEL AND AFTER 30-45 MINUTES OF INTENSE FIGHTING TOOK IT OVER. KESTENBAUM REPORTS ONE PALESTINIAN GUERRILLA KILLED AND FOUR OR FIVE HOSTAGES BADLY WOUNDED, PERHAPS DEAD. ALTOGETHER HE ESTIMATED THAT 15 HOSTAGES WOUNDED.

4. KESTENBAUM ADVISED HE WAS ONLY AMERICAN HOSTAGE. HOSTAGES WERE OF VARIED NATIONALITIES, DANES, SYRIAN AND LEBANESE. TWO OTHER AMERICANS IN HOTEL WERE NOT TAKEN HOSTAGE AND WERE NOT HARMED.

5. SYRIAN RADIO AT 1415 LOCAL STATED HOSTAGES TOTALLED NINETY OF WHOM FOUR DIED IN EXCHANGE OF FIRE. OF THIRTY FOUR TAKEN TO HOSPITAL TWENTY-ONE HAVE ALREADY BEEN RELEASED. SYRIANS HAVE YET TO IDENTIFY PUBLICLY ORGANIZATION IF ANY WHICH BEHIND THIS ATTACK. ATTACKERS SIMPLY DESCRIBED THUS FAR AS "AN ARMED GROUP."

6. APPROPRIATE SECURITY MEASURES HAVE BEEN TAKEN FOR MISSION.
MURPHY

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NNN

Message Attributes

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Margaret P. Grafeld
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EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

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